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Some Things “Not to Do” During Fall

Timing is everything when gardening. Cultural practices provided at just the right time produce positive results, while even hard work done at the wrong time of the season can have the opposite effect.

With this in mind, it is sometimes best to put off certain gardening activities until a better time. Following are some recommended “don’ts” for fall:

- Don’t fertilize the permanent lawn with a fertilizer containing high levels of nitrogen. If late fertilization is done choose a product that is relatively high in potash, or potassium, and low in other elements.
- Don’t do any heavy pruning of shrubs during the fall. Pruning stimulates new growth, which could be damaged by winter freezes. The late pruning of azaleas, camellias, spiraeas and other early spring flowering shrubs also results in the reduction of flower numbers next spring. One exception is the removal of extremely vigorous sprouts that sometimes occur on individual shrubs. These can be removed almost any time.
- Don’t wait until just before the first freeze to bring in tender, tropical container grown plants. There is indication that some of the most cold sensitive species can sustain damage at temperatures in the forty degree F. range.
- Don’t spend a lot of time and money attempting to control mole crickets this late in the year. The prime time for control is during June and July. By now they are mature, tough and very mobile. Also, during cool periods mole crickets can move so deep into the soil that they are difficult to reach with a treatment. Some will overwinter as adults, so be ready for treatment at the right time next year.
- Don’t scalp the lawn, do thatch removal or provide any other practice that would place grass under stress with winter on the way.
- Don’t stop watering the lawn and other landscape plantings. With temperatures cooling down the frequency of irrigation can be reduced, but some supplemental

irrigation will be needed during dry periods. Remember, fall is typically dry along the northern Gulf Coast.

■ Don't stock up on large quantities of fertilizers and other gardening chemicals unless near ideal storage conditions can be provided. Extremes in temperature and high humidity can cause some of these products to age quickly.

■ Don't apply oil sprays too early. With the exception of ultra fine oil, most horticultural oil emulsion sprays should be delayed until a period of mild weather occurs. Safe temperature ranges for application are clearly stated on the label of each product.

Question of the Week: My magnolia trees are producing seed. I would like to grow some trees. What is the procedure for germinating the seed?

Answer: Remove the seed from the cone as soon as it splits open. Remove the red seed coat and fleshy pulp by macerating the seed in water. Freshly cleaned seed may be sown immediately, but germination is sometimes improved by storing them at 40 degrees F. for 2 to 4 months before planting. The bottom portion of a refrigerator provides about the right temperature for this stratification period.

Magnolias grown from seed often vary in crown structure, size, vigor, flower and foliage characteristics. Seed grown plants usually take much longer to flower than the asexually propagated magnolia clones that are currently being sold.